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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 001058

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/17/2016

TAGS: PHUM KIRF PGOV CH

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: RAID OF HOUSE CHURCH AND DETENTION
OF LAWYER GAO ZHISHENG RAISED WITH MFA

Classified By: Political Section Internal Unit Chief
Kin W. Moy. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On January 17, poloff conveyed to MFA Human Rights Division official Wang Gang USG concern about recent reports that the Beijing Ark House Church was raided on January 8 and 15, and reports that defense lawyer Gao Zhisheng was detained on January 13. Wang agreed to inquire about the events with relevant ministries.

¶2. (C) On January 17, Yu Jie, a church member and the owner of the apartment in which the Beijing Ark House Church meets, informed poloff of the details of a report circulated by U.S.-based NGO China Aid Association about raids on the church. On January 8, security officials approached the church after its Sunday service and accused officials of disturbing neighbors, Yu said. On January 15, the officials entered the apartment during the service and aggressively disrupted it, stating that the meeting was an illegal religious gathering. Among those in attendance at the time were activist lawyers Gao Zhisheng and Li Baiguang and former Beijing University professor Jiao Guobiao. No one was detained in either incident.

¶3. (C) Separately, poloff confirmed that defense lawyer to Christian and Falun Gong activists Gao Zhisheng was released January 13 after being detained and questioned for several hours. Gao was hesitant to speak by phone, but later sent a text message indicating that security officials had urged him to avoid contact with foreigners. Yu Jie told poloff he did not believe Gao's troubles and the raid on the house church were linked.

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